



Fact Sheet

Combating Arms Trafficking

“But I will not pretend that this is Mexico's responsibility alone. The demand for drugs in the United States is what is helping to keep these cartels in business. This war is being waged with guns purchased, not [in Mexico], but in the United States.”

*Barack Obama
President
United States of America*

Both the US and the GOM are working to eliminate trans-border firearms trafficking. Law enforcement officials are actively pursuing illegal arms traffickers in order to seize and trace illegal firearms on both sides of the border and arrest and prosecute those responsible. These aggressive measures serve to reduce arms traffickers' incentive to obtain firearms in the United States to sell to Mexican criminal organizations for their use as “tools of the trade” in criminal activity.

Achievements: **Investigation, Prosecution and Regulation**

- **GRIT-** In 2009, ATF's Gun Runner Impact Team (GRIT) initiative targeted gun traffickers in the US. GRIT brought 100 experienced ATF special agents to southern Texas to investigate more than 1,000 criminal leads. Nearly 1,100 firearms license inspections were conducted, involving 70,000 firearms and resulting in 440 violations and 276 federal firearms trafficking-related criminal cases. ATF is currently assisting the PGR in prosecuting two firearms trafficking cases and has identified five additional trafficking cases for PGR review.

The GRIT teams seized over 440 illegal firearms, 141,440 rounds of ammunition, \$165,000 in U.S. currency, and additional drugs and explosive devices. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Mexican authorities launched Operation Armas Cruzadas, a counter smuggling program that relies on bilateral intelligence sharing and law enforcement efforts with vetted Mexican units. The program has resulted in more than 749 criminal arrests and 3,877 weapon seizures. Mexico's Center for Analysis, Planning, and Information (CENAPI) reported that 80,000 firearms were seized from December 2006 to February 2010. Mexican and U.S. law enforcement agencies traced 87% of these weapons.

- **CEIT-** In 2009, ATF formed the Combined Explosives Investigations Team (CEIT) to respond to explosives incidents and to train Mexican partners in the identification, safe-handling, and analysis of seized explosives evidence. In 2010 the CEIT team, including ATF responded twelve (12) times and disabled 122 explosive devices.
- **Regulation of United States Firearms Industry** – ATF has a responsibility to the public to revoke the licenses of Federal Firearms License holders (FFLs) in cases of willful violations of the law and regulations, intentional disregard for regulatory requirements, or participation in criminal acts.
 - 587 total FFL revocations since FY2006
 - 64 FFL revocations in FY2009 (11 along southwest border)
 - 11,375 FFL compliance inspections nationwide for FY2009

Tracing Technology Tools in Action

- **Tracing Data** – ATF and its U.S. and Mexican partners have increased their tracings of firearms seized in Mexico, providing valuable intelligence and tracing data to US and Mexican authorities:
 - 3,216 traces in 2007
 - 7,194 traces in 2008
 - 28,415 traces in 2009
 - 35,298 traces as of April 2010
- **Spanish e-Trace** – ATF and Mexico have deployed Spanish e-Trace, a web-based system that allows Mexican investigators to trace weapons known to originate in the US. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be signed by US and Mexican authorities in May 2010 that establishes the conditions of the e-Trace partnership between ATF and Mexico which is designed to strengthen efforts to combat firearms trafficking. Additionally, expansion of the e-Trace system to all thirty-two Mexican Attorney General state branch offices is underway, and Mexico is working to link the tracing data to its criminal justice data system, “Plataforma Mexico.”
- **Integrated Ballistics Identification Systems (IBIS)** – Four IBIS were purchased by the US for Mexican forensics labs in 2009.

Training and Collaboration

- **Communication** – CENAPI, in coordination with the Secretariat of Defense, provides monthly bi-national bulletins on secured weapons and relevant seizures. ATF Special Agents also attend meetings with the analysts of CENAPI.
- **Arms Trafficking Workshops** – Three bilateral arms trafficking workshops in 2009 resulted in established protocols that clarified roles and responsibilities for weapons tracing procedures. U.S. and Mexican officials also have a work plan in place to significantly improve judicial cooperation, intelligence sharing, and the detection of weapons movement.
- **Specialized Training** – In March 2010 ICE provided training to 18 Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA) officials on Crossed Arms, a domestic program that tracks firearms trafficking cases. ATF provided courses on explosives and evidence collection to representatives from SEDENA, the Attorney General's office, the Navy, and Mexican State agencies in April 2010.
- **Information and Investigations** – Mexico shares data and information in preliminary investigations, investigations into straw purchasers, prosecutions, and other judicial proceedings with US authorities.
- **Training for Prosecutors** – ICE, ATF, FBI, and DOJ are providing best practices training to prosecutors from the Mexican Attorney General's office.
- **K-9 Teams** – In April 2010, a total of fourteen Mexican Customs officials and their dogs graduated from the Border Patrol Canine Academy in El Paso, Texas with training in the detection of drugs, weapons, ammunition, and currency. Eleven K-9 teams and two instructors have been supplied to the Secretariat of Public Security (SSP) for work in Ciudad Juarez, and three K-9 teams have been supplied to the Attorney General's office. ATF has also conducted canine training for Mexican trainers at the Federal Investigative Agency and SSP on four occasions.
- **e-Trace Training** – As requested by the Government of Mexico, ATF will provide e-Trace training to CENAPI personnel in each Mexican state on dates to be determined.

Future Directions

Build Investigative Capacity

- **More GRIT Teams** – Additional ATF GRIT teams are scheduled for 2010.
- **Vetted Unit** – A specialized, vetted unit for arms trafficking investigations and prosecutions is being created to link firearms to drug cartels for prosecution.
- **Straw Purchasers** – Mexico is working to obtain a comprehensive list of straw purchasers and other persons who have a history of acquiring arms to share with US authorities.
- **IBIS Expansion** – The US will soon provide two additional IBIS machines to Mexico.

Prosecutions/Judicial Cooperation

- **Protocols for Evidence**— US and Mexican authorities are in consultation to establish protocols to ensure evidence is admissible in both US and Mexico courts.
- **Increase Judicial Prosecutions for Firearms and Explosive trafficking**—US and Mexican authorities are engaged in high level working group to increase the number of firearms and explosive trafficking cases prosecuted on both sides of the border.

Tracing/Information Technology

- **Analytical-Train-the-Trainer for Spanish e-Trace** – Implementation of the Train-the-Trainer model will be expanded to the entire Spanish e-Trace program. The first of 16 classes began in February 2010. Through Spanish e-Trace, ATF will train Mexican analysts in firearms analysis in 2010.
- **IBIS** – The US and Mexico will be linked to provide comprehensive ballistic identification information for weapons seized on either side of the border.
- **Gunfire Location Technology** – A new technology that identifies and triangulates the location of gunfire shots will be assessed at a bi-national meeting scheduled for May 2010.